

Consumer Archetype Brand Stories:
Theory and Research on Consumers' Reports of Interactions
With Brands and Experiencing Primal Forces

Suresh C Sood

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Certificate of Authorship / Originality

I, Suresh Chandara Sood, certify that this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and in the preparation of the thesis has been recognised and acknowledged. **In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used** are indicated in the thesis.

S. Sood

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'S. Sood' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal stroke that extends to the right and then curves back towards the left, ending under the 'S'.

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ABSTRACT

A scarcity of research exists on consumer self-storytelling relative to consumer attitude research. With over 126 million blogs online (Nielsen Company 2010), the unsolicited unstructured self-report consumer brand stories performed in naturalistic settings and found as blog posts represent first-hand conversations taking place between brands and users. These consumer stories provide direction for story genre and consumer-brand relationships for products or services and brand repositioning. This research proposes a theory of brand-enabling archetype enactment by consumers of core archetype stories. The model describes how consumers use brands as props or anthropomorphic actors in stories consumers report about themselves on the Web. The stories are drama enactments enabling the storytellers to experience powerful myths. The construction of these first person stories about the online self (“I” or “me”) occurs through a process of storification (Aylett 2000) driving consumer sense-making about brands and completing gaps in autobiographical memory (Fivush and Haden 2003).

The research method incorporates a modified form of netnography (Kozinets 2010) Brand netnography using Wiki technology and purposive sampling of consumers’ brand stories found on weblogs provide the key source of interpretive data. These emic reports and self-interpretations involve the purchase and/or consumption of fashion, travel and luxury brands in which consumers experience high emotion during purchase or use. A key research finding discrepant with the mainstream thinking of advertisers and marketers who use archetypes to connect with consumers suggests the caregiver archetype and not the hero as the pre-eminent mental model driving online consumer brand stories. These findings represent archetypes derivable from consumer brand stories in place of the traditional focus on creative stories by marketers.